

THE HISTORY OF NEW PERSPECTIVES AND ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT

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Abstract—Arkansas occupies a unique and important place in the history of New Perspectives and Ecosystem Management. An historic visit to the Ouachita National Forest by Senator David Pryor (D-Arkansas) in August 1990, thereafter called the walk in the woods, served as an opportunity to shift the Ouachita's style of management in a manner that has served as a model for other national forests in the Nation. This paper summarizes limits of the multiple-use concept, outlines some important elements that constitute the basis of the New Perspectives program, and discusses from the author's perspective the evolution of the Ecosystem Management concept while he served as Chief of the USDA Forest Service.

INTRODUCTION

Thanks for this opportunity to come back to my home State, and to the Ouachita National Forest (NF), where I began my Forest Service career. Dr. Jim Baker, a key leader of the research underlying this symposium, and I were classmates at Arkansas Agricultural and Mechanical (A&M) College, now the University of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM). He went on to become a world-class research scientist. I pursued a less honorable career path and became Chief of the Forest Service, and by doing so got an opportunity for early retirement—which is an occupational hazard for Chiefs!

This morning, I was asked to kick off your symposium by talking about the history of the New Perspectives and Ecosystem Management concepts, the importance of the Ouachita NF in that history, and my view of changes that have occurred in the last 9 years. I am eager to hear and see first-hand how things are going 9 years after the so-called walk in the woods back in August 1990 with Senator David Pryor. Tomorrow, I'm taking another walk in the woods, but the good news is that I have absolutely no authority to make any decisions. So you Rangers can relax, you do not have anything to worry about!

I will give you my perspective as Chief from the Washington, D.C., vantage point. National policy making is never a very pretty thing, even for a highly professional outfit like the Forest Service, when it involves a scientific topic like Ecosystem Management. It was also a sensitive political issue that had to play out in the Washington, D.C., political environment. So, here is my story.

THE LIMITS OF MULTIPLE-USE MANAGEMENT

Fortunately or unfortunately during my tenure as Chief, multiple-use management, as it was being practiced on the national forests, hit a wall. Management of the national forests got mired down in intense public controversy, with many of our land management decisions being appealed and challenged in the courts. It was taking an extraordinary amount of time and effort to get even the simplest jobs done, like timber sales here on the Ouachita NF.

For the first time in its history, the Forest Service began to fall short in a major way of meeting its financed goals and targets as outlined in the congressionally approved budget and appropriation laws. The Forest Service had always been known as a can-do outfit. I was rapidly becoming the most experienced Chief in the history of the Forest Service in trying to explain to Congress and user groups why the Forest Service was not meeting its financed goals and targets. I think that probably everyone here pretty well knows the reasons behind the Forest Service's situation at that time, so I won't spend much time on that.

Even though clearcutting was really a big issue here in Arkansas, it was not a new issue. In fact, the first professionally trained forester in America, Bernard E. Fernow, was fired in 1903 for clearcutting on the Cornell University Experimental Forest in the Adirondack Mountains of New York. Due to the clearcutting issue, he completely lost the first forestry school in America when New York State decided to zero out his budget.

Thus, clearcutting has always been a threatening cloud hanging over the forestry profession from the very beginning of American forestry. The American people simply do not like the way clearcuts look, and they highly value the scenic qualities of their national forests. That is something that Forest Service people in Arkansas know as well or better than anyone else in the country.

The primary new drivers of change in management of the national forests were the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the viability requirement of the National Forest Management Act (NFMA), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and the courts. The ESA was the most difficult to deal with because it really established the protection of critical habitat for endangered species as a dominant use. The Forest Service has had great difficulty fitting endangered species, such as the northern spotted owl, within our overall multiple-use management concept.

Over the years, under the multiple-use concept the Forest Service had gotten very good and comfortable at considering the relative values of many resources, making trade-

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offs, and arriving at what we thought were good, balanced decisions. This was the trademark that the Forest Service had been well known for since the days of Gifford Pinchot. But, when we got hauled into court, most of the judges either did not understand our decision-making process, thought it was procedurally inadequate under NEPA, or disagreed with the decision. The trade-offs that we had been making over the years under the concept of multiple-use became no longer acceptable. And, the Forest Service was fast building up a bookcase full of case law that made it increasingly difficult to manage the national forests under the thinking of that time.

So, the time was ripe for some rather drastic conceptual changes in how the Forest Service managed the national forests. And I happened to be the Chief at the time serving in a Republican Administration that was not too keen on making major policy changes, especially if it would adversely affect economic benefits from the national forests.

CHANGES IN THINKING AND POLICY

It was relatively easy to conclude that the concept of multiple use, especially with a heavy reliance on clearcutting, had its shortcomings. As it was being practiced, the concept was not comprehensive enough to encompass all the considerations and values that the Forest Service had to take into account in the future management of the national forests. But few people had better alternatives. At the time, the choice was either to continue to shore up and strengthen the multiple-use management concept, or to make a major conceptual change in our way of thinking about how the national forests should be managed.

Well, we decided to start down the path of change, not knowing for sure where it was going to lead us. At the time, the term ecosystem management was not a common term in our vocabulary—maybe only in the minds of a few of our ecologists and other scientists.

New Forestry

Jerry Franklin, a research forest ecologist at the Pacific Northwest Forest and Range Experiment Station, was one of the first to take an ecological approach in dealing with the old growth/spotted owl issue. As I remember, Jerry's new idea was then that we should view the forest as an ecosystem and expand our thinking and planning to encompass something called a landscape. An ecosystem at the landscape level had certain structural characteristics like old-growth trees, large snags, down logs, and shaded riparian areas. Jerry recommended that all of these ecological values should be perpetuated in the forest through time in order to maintain all pieces of the ecosystem (including endangered species). At about the same time, a few other Forest Service scientists, like Tom Crow in the Lake States, were also developing similar ecological concepts.

Jerry began to work with district rangers in the Pacific Northwest to pilot test his ecological concepts in the design of timber sales. Soon we were able to see what Jerry's ideas looked like on the ground. As Chief, I went out to see some of the results. It was certainly different and in many ways looked like a sloppy, unfinished logging job!

Perhaps unfortunately, Jerry called it new forestry. It generated a lot of controversy in the Pacific Northwest. Some old timers called it old forestry, referring to the kind of high-grade logging that they did back in the 1950's. As you might suspect, Jerry was not very popular with many in the forestry community of the Pacific Northwest. But, as Chief I knew Jerry personally from my days as Forest Supervisor of the Siuslaw NF and had a lot of confidence in his work. Besides, no one else was coming forth with any better ideas about how to solve our old-growth/spotted owl issue in the Pacific Northwest.

I ended up giving Jerry an award for his pioneering work in Ecosystem Management. I remember his acceptance speech saying that the Chief should get an award for having the courage to give him an award for his controversial work.

New Perspectives

The next stage was something called New Perspectives. By now, problems managing the national forests were multiplying and the controversy growing more intense. Congress also was feeling the heat and wanted assurance that the Forest Service was getting on top of its land management problems. One of the congressional committees decided to hold an oversight hearing and the essence of the subject was, "Chief, what are you doing about all of these problems in the Forest Service?"

The usual procedure in getting prepared for a congressional hearing is for your staff to prepare draft testimony along with a 3- to 4-inch-thick briefing book. The staff meets with the Chief a day or two before the hearing to go over the proposed testimony and make sure the Chief is comfortable with the Forest Service statement.

Well, that was the first time I ever laid eyes on the words New Perspectives. The words jumped out at me and I remember asking a lot of questions like, "Why call it New Perspectives?" The staff explained that we could not use the term new forestry because of its controversial history and baggage. They convinced me that New Perspectives was a good, neutral term and it would be hard for anyone to disagree with. Besides, it pretty well represented our broadening concept of national forest management.

Once I got over the idea of this new terminology, I did some editing to make it a stronger statement about actions the Forest Service would take to get on top of our land management problems. New Perspectives was to be a creative, experimental program to pilot test different concepts of land management. Researchers and land managers were to work together as a team in addressing the issues on each national forest. It meant that we had to shift the priorities of our researchers, to which Jerry SESCO, the Deputy Chief for Research, agreed in advance. I was to direct each Forest Supervisor, through the Regional Foresters, to get together with the appropriate research scientists and design some pilot tests or experimental projects to demonstrate a new and more environmentally sensitive way of managing each national forest.

The briefing book included write-ups on all of the current and planned projects going on throughout the Forest Service

that could be included in the New Perspectives program. Congressional hearings are a lot like final exams in college, except they are oral exams with Members of Congress asking the questions. Also, Members often have their own agendas, and they try to get the Chief to answer in a way that supports their individual viewpoints. So, after reading and studying all of the write-ups in my briefing book, I probably knew as much or more than anyone else in the Forest Service, on that particular day, about the intent and meaning of New Perspectives. It is almost as dangerous for the Chief to go to Congress to testify as it is to go on a walk in the woods—you never know what sort of policy might get made in the process.

So off to the Hill I went announcing the New Perspectives program as the new Forest Service way of dealing with many of our land management problems. As I recall, it was a friendly hearing with a lot of good questions by members. I am sure that over the course of the hearing, I must have added some details about the intent and meaning of New Perspectives. I think the Committee was generally convinced that the Forest Service was making a sincere and strong effort to get on top of our land management problems.

I was really proud of how quickly Forest Service field people responded in implementing New Perspectives projects. Before long, people could see on-the-ground results, including here in Arkansas on the Ouachita NF and the Ozark-St. Francis NF. It also set in motion an unprecedented degree of cooperation and teamwork among national forest land managers and researchers.

Ouachita NF Situation—The Walk In The Woods

In many cases, the Chief gets involved in national forest issues in which he does not have first-hand knowledge and experience, and has to depend on what other people tell him about the issues. However, in the case of the Ouachita NF, I did have some previous experience, even though it had been a long time ago. I graduated from the Forestry School at Arkansas A&M, now the University of Arkansas at Monticello, and learned a lot about southern pine management, including the uneven-aged management practices on the Crossett Experimental Forest. During my college years, I worked for two summers in the late 1950's on the Womble Ranger District (RD) at Mount Ida, Arkansas, mainly on a timber marking crew and a timber stand improvement crew. So, I had walked up and down a lot of mountains on the Ouachita NF and knew what the country and forest looked like before the Forest Service began large-scale clearcutting.

In the mid-1960s, I was the District Ranger on the Choctaw RD of the Ouachita NF. Ironically, I am the only Chief out of the 14 in the history of the Forest Service who has ever been a District Ranger. So, the Ouachita NF has the honor of being the only national forest ever to have produced a Chief out of its Ranger ranks.

I also remember participating in a Ouachita NF Ranger/Staff meeting here in Hot Springs in about 1966. We had been in the clearcutting business for about 2 years and we Rangers were getting some flak from the natives. At the Ranger/Staff meeting we expressed our concerns about clearcutting. As I remember, the Forest Supervisor and

Timber staff dealt with our concerns rather directly and bluntly and told us our job was to go home and educate the public about the merits of clearcutting. So, I spent the next 2 years trying to do just that here on the Ouachita NF.

Well, I left the Ouachita NF in 1968 and did not get involved again until the famous walk in the woods in 1990, some 22 years later. So, I will tell you about that.

U.S. Senator, David Pryor of Arkansas was on our back about clearcutting on the Ouachita NF. He had written me a couple of letters asking me to look into the situation and see if we could stop it. My very competent staff in Washington, D.C., with the help of Region 8 staff in Atlanta, had prepared responses to Senator Pryor that should have convinced any reasonable person that clearcutting was an essential silvicultural tool for managing the Ouachita NF. However, Senator Pryor wasn't buying it. He wrote me another letter asking me to stop clearcutting on the Ouachita NF. Again, my staff prepared a response that told him the same thing, as though he did not quite understand the first letter. This time, however, my staff decided that the issue with Senator Pryor had escalated to the point that the Chief should sign the letter.

Well, when the letter arrived on my desk for signature and I reviewed its long history, I decided to rewrite it myself. As I recall, I wrote a short response saying that I, too, had some concerns about clearcutting in Arkansas and that we were experimenting with something called New Perspectives aimed at gradually getting out of the clearcutting business as a standard timber harvest practice. I then invited Senator Pryor to join me in a visit to the Ouachita NF to see first-hand how we were managing the Forest. He accepted my offer and we were on our way to Arkansas as soon as schedules could be worked out.

The walk in the woods, as it was later called, took place in August 1990 on the Winona Ranger District of the Ouachita NF. Along with Senator Pryor and myself were Regional Forester Jack Alcock, Forest Supervisor Mike Curran, Dr. Jim Baker from the Southern Forest Experiment Station, and District Ranger Norman Alley. Thus, we had line officers from the four levels of the Forest Service, plus a researcher—a potentially dangerous group, as the Rangers later found out! We spent the morning looking at some clearcuts, as well as some New Perspectives timber sales.

As a group, I think we were all impressed with the New Perspectives projects. I remember Jim Baker explaining to Senator Pryor how important it was to manage the sunlight so as to be able to regenerate the forest to desirable species. This really made an impression on the Senator. Also, I noticed that Ranger Alley had a twinkle in his eye and sense of excitement about his New Perspectives projects, which impressed me. And we never succeeded in convincing the Senator that clearcutting was an essential silvicultural tool on the Ouachita NF, especially since we had good examples of successful partial cutting methods under our New Perspectives program. We ended up at Lake Sylvia Recreation Area for a picnic lunch, which concluded our trip with Senator Pryor. The Ranger's wife got involved in providing us a fancy tablecloth and some

really great food for lunch, which also really impressed the Senator.

Over lunch, the inevitable question came up, "Why can't the Forest Service manage the entire Ouachita NF using the partial cutting practices that we had just seen on the New Perspectives projects and do away with clearcutting?" The main arguments against doing away with clearcutting at that time were:

- (1) New Perspectives was a new, experimental program in its early stages of implementation and had not been proven successful yet, except for the fact that we could harvest timber in a way that was not an eyesore to the public.
- (2) The jump from a few experimental New Perspectives timber sales to managing the entire Ouachita NF based on the principles of New Perspectives without the use of clearcutting had huge operational problems. How would you like to have been a Ranger at that time with the Chief and Regional Forester coming to town and turning your whole timber sale program upside down? It would be like trying to assemble a bicycle and ride it at the same time.

In spite of these good reasons to continue clearcutting on the Ouachita, Jack, Mike, and I knew down deep that we were on an unpopular, losing path and that some rather drastic changes were needed. We also knew that those changes would be difficult regardless of the timing. Dr. Jim Baker participated in the discussion and said that he was willing to shift his priorities to help the Rangers. Knowing that my old college classmate was willing to step up to the plate and put his professional reputation on the line gave me added confidence. Forest Supervisor Curran and Ranger Alley said they were willing to go for the change. We four line officers agreed that such a change would severely disrupt the timber sale program. However, we were all in this thing together and would take collective responsibility for any downfall in target accomplishments. The Rangers were not to be left hanging out on a limb alone.

So, we made the decision to designate the entire Ouachita NF as a New Perspective Forest, and the rest is history. That is why you are having this symposium this week. I hope you conclude that it turned out well!

This was not only a big decision for the Ouachita NF, but also a big one for the entire Forest Service. It caught everyone's attention both inside and outside the agency. They suddenly understood the importance and implications of the New Perspectives program—that it was for real and that the Forest Service was getting serious about making a major conceptual change in how we managed the national forests.

Ecosystem Management

As time marched on, the New Perspectives program gained momentum, and more and more projects came on-line with good success. People began to describe what they were doing under the New Perspectives and Ecosystem Management programs. These terms began to find their way into the Forest Service vocabulary with some regularity. There was a fast-developing consensus in the agency that Eco-

system Management was the new concept that we had been searching for to guide future management of the national forests.

However, making a major policy change in the Washington, D.C., political environment is not easy and takes time. This is especially the case if it becomes controversial and could result in changing the way national forests are managed. So, I will tell you the story of how the policy change was made in Washington, D.C. Again, our old friend, clearcutting, played a crucial role, just as it did here in Arkansas.

Bill Riley was Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) during the Bush Administration. I knew Bill before he was appointed to the EPA job, and we would occasionally get together for lunch just to talk things over. Bill was concerned about clearcutting and the old-growth forests of the Pacific Northwest. We always ended up talking about these issues and Bill became quite knowledgeable about them.

Then in 1992, the Earth Summit (United Nations Conference on Environment and Development) was held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Bill Riley was appointed head of the U.S. delegation. When he got to Rio, several representatives of American environmental groups and some Members of Congress were there questioning forestry practices in the United States and holding press conferences telling the world about how the U.S. was managing its forests. The main issues were clearcutting and old-growth forests—the very issues Bill was concerned about and had been talking to me about.

Bill and the other U.S. delegates were getting beat up pretty badly in Rio de Janeiro. I am sure that the other leaders from around the world were pretty confused by having an official delegation from the U.S. saying that we were doing a good job of managing our forests and an unofficial group of Americans, including some Members of Congress, vehemently disagreeing. President Bush was scheduled to go to Brazil and make a speech on the closing day of the Earth Summit.

The end of the Bush Administration was near, and there had been some major personnel changes in the White House. As it turned out, my old boss and friend, former Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter, was serving as the President's Chief of Staff. During all of this controversy, Bill Riley was talking to Clayton in the White House. Because the U.S. was getting roughed up pretty badly, there was even discussion about whether the President should go to Brazil and subject himself to all the controversy. Bill asked Clayton to talk to me to see if the U.S. could make a policy statement about clearcutting on Federal lands and let President Bush announce the policy change in his speech at the Earth Summit.

Clayton called me from the White House. Falling back on my experience here on the Ouachita NF, I told him that the Forest Service was willing to eliminate clearcutting as a standard method of timber harvest on the national forests. However, we still needed to keep the option open for exceptional cases.

Then I made the big move! I called Clayton and told him I would also like to announce that we were officially adopting an Ecosystem Management policy for the national forests. There was a little pause and then he asked, "What in the world is Ecosystem Management?" I had about 5 minutes to explain it to him and describe why it was a good policy for the country. After he had heard my explanation, Clayton said that the policy sounded pretty good to him and asked that I write it up and fax it to him so he could discuss it with the President.

I went home that night and worked until about 11 p.m. on the proposed Clearcutting and Ecosystem Management policy statement. I got up at 3 a.m. the next morning and worked another 3 hours on it. I had to come up with wording that made sense to Forest Service employees, as well as to Clayton and President Bush in his speech in Brazil. At about 8 a.m., I faxed the statement to the White House. In about an hour, Clayton called me and said the President liked it and wanted to announce the policy in his speech at the Earth Summit.

In the meantime, back home at the Department of Agriculture, all was not well. My relatively new boss, Secretary of Agriculture Madigan, had not been in the loop and was unaware of what was going on. He was not an easy person to work with, and our relationship was a rather rocky one. Secretary Madigan, having no experience in forestry, thought that a good Chief would run a peaceful Forest Service without much controversy. By his standards, I was not performing very well. I knew that it would not be easy to get his approval. The Acting Assistant Secretary of Agriculture was John Beuter, a professional forester, and he was a big help in getting the policy through the Department. After we had met with Secretary Madigan's key staff, they reluctantly agreed to go along with the new policy, especially since

President Bush had already approved it. However, this situation certainly did not improve my rather poor standing with Secretary Madigan.

As it played out, I issued the famous policy letter of June 4, 1992, on clearcutting and ecosystem management as the President was leaving for Rio de Janeiro. The President gave his speech at the Earth Summit, and an important part of it was the new policy statement. So, that is the real story as to how it all happened in Washington, D.C.

CONCLUSIONS

I would just like to conclude by saying that the Chief has to stand on the shoulders of Forest Service field people. By being creative and working hard to make the new perspectives program successful, they were the real key players. They forged the thinking that became the Ecosystem Management concept. As Chief, I was able to marshal a unique fleeting opportunity to translate this thinking into a major policy change for future management of the national forests. As you can see, the Ouachita NF played a crucial role in how it all unfolded. And I thank you for that!

Well, all of you know the rest of the story. We had a presidential election in November 1992 and your guy from Arkansas won. The new Administration strongly supports ecosystem management, and has made it the centerpiece of their policy in managing the national forests. However, they wanted a Chief of their own choosing.

So, I rode off into the sunset to Arizona where I am pursuing a new life unencumbered by the forestry issues of the day. It has been my great pleasure to return to Arkansas and, after 9 years, to see strong evidence that the decisions I made as Chief are working out better than I had hoped.